

Musgrave makes waves in Wash.

By ROB JENKINS

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United States Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave is making some big waves in Washington in her first year on the hill.

The freshman representative from Colorado's 4th Congressional District has made national headlines with her controversial same-sex marriage federal constitutional amendment.

Musgrave is quick to point out when discussing the proposed amendment that would reserve marriages solely for "unions between a man and a woman," that this is not the first time that this issue has come before legislative branch-

es.

Musgrave points to the 107th Congress when a similar initiative was brought forward by a Democrat but received very little national attention.

This time around, the same initiative has spurred national support, as well as, some very vocal opposition — the most recent of which was a 2,000-person demonstration against the proposed amendment on Saturday in Denver.

Among those voicing opposition to the amendment, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., stood with demonstrators on the east lawn of Denver City Hall to denounce the initiative.

"Allowing gay and lesbian

couples to marry, I'm pleased to say, will not impact the sanctity of my marriage," DeGette said.

Not only does Musgrave find DeGette's comments off base but highly predictable.

"It's very predictable, very predictable," Musgrave said. "When Amendment 2 passed in Colorado, then Mayor Wellington Webb marched with homosexual activists in election night protests, so it is very predictable that the mayor of Denver and Diana DeGette, who represents Denver, would be on the other side of this issue."

Musgrave also points to recent polling statistics to illustrate the majority of Americans being in favor of the same-sex marriage ban.

"Interestingly enough, though, polling shows that 65 percent of people support marriage as being defined as the union between a man and a woman. So I am positive that this is where the American people stand," she said.

According to Musgrave, same sex marriages or the redefining of marriage to include gay and lesbian unions would be detrimental to the institution of marriage itself.

"Redefining marriage, of course, would destroy the institution of marriage between a man and a woman, not individual marriages but the institution of marriage, and if we redefine marriage, what does that mean? Is

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polygamy going to be accepted? Is group marriage going to be accepted? The definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman has been in place for over 200 years. It is the definition that is held by all the world's major religions, and if marriage is going to be redefined — and I hope that never happens — it should be done by the American people and their elected representatives not unelected, unaccountable judges," Musgrave said.

Musgrave is careful to point out, however, that while the proposed gay marriage ban is a hot media topic, she should not be considered a one-issue representative.

Over the course of her first year in Congress, Musgrave has labored to address the concerns of her constituents mostly with ag-related initiatives and programs.

Musgrave has worked closely with Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., on instream flow issues resulting in the Madigan Letter, a letter providing assurances that would not create new rights for instream flow water.

She has also worked on the Arkansas Valley Conduit project assuring quality water to Arkansas Valley residents.

Musgrave has also worked

for providing disaster relief for those suffering from drought in her district.

"Disaster relief for farmers and ranchers is very high on my list. It still is," Musgrave said.

In addition to these and a host of other ag-related issues, Musgrave has been vocal in her opposition of the gas tax increase proposed by Transportation Committee Chairman Don Young of Alaska.

The tax would result in an immediate five-cent gas tax increase that would index after the first year. Musgrave's concerns about the tax increase is the \$375 billion the tax would create would result in a \$147 billion increase in deficit.

"Regressive taxes are the hardest of all on the working poor," Musgrave explained. "I made a pledge that when I ran for Congress, I would not make increases in taxes, and that is something I am not going to do."

Two initiatives that Musgrave has proposed for adding money to transportation are the Davis-Bacon Act repeal and the Fast Act.

The Davis-Bacon repeal is an initiative for highway construction. In rural areas, according to Musgrave, the repeal would result in as much

as a 38 percent savings on road construction and a 15 percent savings in urban areas.

The Fast Act, an initiative introduced by Congressman Mark Kennedy, proposes tolling for new interstate highways as a user fee that would create billions of dollars for transportation, Musgrave said.

The discouraging thing for Musgrave with regards to the two initiatives was Young's failure to give the initiatives hearings.

"Chairman Young has neglected to give these two things a hearing. The president recently said in Philadelphia that 'we will not have an increase in the gas tax' so I think we need to be very creative in getting more money there (into transportation)," Musgrave explained. "Mr. Young thinks it's his way or no highway."

Musgrave is admittedly enjoying her brief stay in Colorado, which included a speech Monday night at the Morgan County Republican Party's annual Lincoln Day Dinner at the Country Steak Out.

After this Musgrave will hit the road taking on a grueling traveling schedule in late February and March that will take her throughout the 4th Congressional District.